



Chapter Four

Preaching

Origins

Today, many scientists are propagating the doctrine that life originates from matter. However, they cannot provide proof, either experimentally or theoretically. In fact, they hold their stance essentially on faith, in the face of all sorts of scientific objections. Srila Prabhupada points out that this groundless dogma has done great damage to the moral and spiritual standards worldwide and has thus caused incalculable suffering.

One of the great challenges for the Krishna consciousness movement is to expose this misconception and to establish the viewpoint as the most viable and complete explanation of reality.

Atheistic Science

Since the time of Newton, science has held that phenomena can be described (at least in principle) in terms of measurable quantities that can be calculated using simple mathematical laws. This premise, which we call the principle of reductionism, implies that reality is essentially simple and that human beings, through the power of their minds and senses alone, may ultimately be able to fully understand the nature and origin of all phenomena in the universe. Even though the principle of reductionism is certainly to start with, it has provided the underlying strategy for scientific research, and as scientists have gone from one success to another, their faith in the universal applicability of this principle has grown stronger and stronger.

Yet, the unqualified acceptance of the principle of reductionism has some extremely disturbing consequences. It reduces the universe to a mechanism operating according to impersonal laws, and it reduces the individual human being to a complex whose "will" and "feelings" correspond to nothing more than patterns of chemical interactions among molecules.

As a result, values and ethical norms can no longer be understood as fundamental principles, originating from a transcendental creator who defines the ultimate purpose and meaning of life. Rather, they become mere strategies for survival that originated by chance, were perpetuated because of their effectiveness under certain circumstances and will be swept aside by inexorable physical transformation as those circumstances change. In this regard, the physicist Wolfgang Paull predicted, "We may well reach the point in the not too distant future where the parables and images of the old religions will have lost their persuasive force even for the average person; when that happens, I am afraid that all the old ethics will collapse like a house of cards and that unimaginable horrors will be perpetrated".



Given the serious implications of the reductionistic approach of modern science, we should hesitate to accept it as completely valid unless forced to do so by truly compelling evidence.

Many scientists and philosophers maintain that such evidence has already been found in great abundance. Yet a close examination of current scientific theories reveals that this is simply not so. Although scientists have undoubtedly made many significant discoveries, they have been hasty in claiming that they have proven their world system based on the principle of reductionism

Krishna, Christos, Christ

In 1974, near ISKCON's center in Frankfurt am Main, West Germany, Srila Prabhupada and several of his disciples took a morning walk with father Emmanuel Jungclaussen, a Benedictine monk from Niederalteich Monastery.

Noticing that Srila Prabhupada was carrying meditation beads similar to the rosary, Father Emmanuel explained that he also chanted a constant prayer: "Lord Jesus Christ, be merciful unto us." The following conversation ensued.

Srila Prabhupada: What is the meaning of the word Christ?

Father Emmanuel: Christ comes from the Greek word Christos, meaning "the anointed one."

Srila Prabhupada: Christos is the Greek version of the word Krsna.

Father Emmanuel: This is very interesting.

Srila Prabhupada: When an Indian person calls on Krsna, he often says, "Krsta." Krsta is a Sanskrit word meaning "attraction." So when we address God as "Christ," "Krsta," or "Krsna," we indicate the same all-attractive Supreme Personality of Godhead. When Jesus said, "Our Father, who art in heaven, sanctified be Thy name," that name of God was "Krsta" or "Krsna." Do you agree?

Father Emmanuel: I think Jesus, as the son of God, has revealed to us the actual name of God: Christ. We can call God "Father," but if we want to address Him by His actual name, we have to say "Christ."

Srila Prabhupada: Yes. "Christ" is another way of saying Krsta, and "Krsta" is another way of pronouncing Krsna, the name of God. Jesus said that one should glorify the name of God, but yesterday I heard one theologian say that God has no name -- that we can call Him only "Father." A son may call his father "Father," but the father also has a specific name. Similarly, "God" is the general name of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, whose specific name is Krsna. Therefore whether you call God



"Christ," "Krsta," or "Krsna," ultimately you are addressing the same Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Father Emmanuel: Yes, if we speak of God's actual name, then we must say, "Christos." In our religion, we have the Trinity: the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. We believe we can know the name of God only by revelation

from the Son of God. Jesus Christ revealed the name of the father, and therefore we take the name Christ as the revealed name of God.

Srila Prabhupada: Actually, it doesn't matter -- Krsna or Christ -- the name is the same. The main point is to follow the injunctions of the Vedic scriptures that recommend chanting the name of God in this age. The easiest way is to chant the maha-mantra: Hare Krsna, Hare Krsna, Krsna Krsna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare. Rama and Krsna are names of God, and Hare is the energy of God. So when we chant the maha-mantra, we address God together with His energy. This energy is of two kinds, the spiritual and the material. At present we are in the clutches of the material energy. Therefore we pray to Krsna that He may kindly deliver us from the service of the material energy and accept us into the service of the spiritual energy. That is our whole philosophy. Hare Krsna means, "O energy of God, O God [Krsna], please engage me in Your service." It is our nature to render service. Somehow or other we have come to the service of material things, but when this service is transformed into the service of the spiritual energy, then our life is perfect. To practice bhakti-yoga [loving service to God] means to become free from designations like "Hindu," "Muslim," "Christian," this or that, and simply to serve God. We have created Christian, Hindu, and Muhammadan religions, but when we come to a religion without designations, in which we don't think we are Hindus or Christians or Muhammadans, then we can speak of pure religion, or bhakti.

Father Emmanuel: Mukti?

Srila Prabhupada: No, bhakti. When we speak of bhakti, mukti [liberation from material miseries] is included. Without bhakti there is no mukti, but if we act on the platform of bhakti, then mukti is included. We learn this from the Bhagavad-gita (14.26):

mam ca yo 'vyabhicarena
bhakti-yogena sevate
sa gunan samatityaitan
brahma-bhuyaya kalpate



"One who engages in full devotional service, who does not fall down under any circumstance, at once transcends the modes of material nature and thus comes to the level of Brahman."

Father Emmanuel: Is Brahman Krsna?

Srila Prabhupada: Krsna is Parabrahman. Brahman is realized in three aspects: as impersonal Brahman, as localized Paramatma, and as personal Brahman. Krsna is personal, and He is the Supreme Brahman, for God is ultimately a person. In the Srimad-Bhagavatam (1.2.11), this is confirmed:

vadanti tat tattva-vidas
tattvam yaj jnanam advayam
brahmeti paramatmeti
bhagavan iti sabdyate

"Learned transcendentalists who know the Absolute Truth call this nondual substance Brahman, Paramatma, or Bhagavan." The feature of the Supreme Personality is the ultimate realization of God. He has all six opulences in full: He is the strongest, the richest, the most beautiful, the most famous, the wisest, and the most renounced.

Father Emmanuel: Yes, I agree.

Srila Prabhupada: Because God is absolute, His name, His form, and His qualities are also absolute, and they are nondifferent from Him. Therefore to chant God's holy name means to associate directly with Him. When one associates with God, one acquires godly qualities, and when one is completely purified, one becomes an associate of the Supreme Lord.

Father Emmanuel: But our understanding of the name of God is limited.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes, we are limited, but God is unlimited. And because He is unlimited, or absolute, He has unlimited names, each of which is God. We can understand His names as much as our spiritual understanding is developed.

Father Emmanuel: May I ask a question? We Christians also preach love of God, and we try to realize love of God and render service to Him with all our heart and all our soul. Now, what is the difference between your movement and ours? Why do you send your disciples to the Western countries to preach love of God when the gospel of Jesus Christ is propounding the same message?

Srila Prabhupada: The problem is that the Christians do not follow the commandments of God. Do you agree?

Father Emmanuel: Yes, to a large extent you're right.



Srila Prabhupada: Then what is the meaning of the Christians' love for God?

If you do not follow the orders of God, then where is your love? Therefore we have come to teach what it means to love God: if you love Him, you cannot be disobedient to His orders. And if you're disobedient, your love is not true.

All over the world, people love not God but their dogs. The Krsna consciousness movement is therefore necessary to teach people how to revive their forgotten love for God. Not only the Christians, but also the Hindus, the Muhammadans, and all others are guilty. They have rubber-stamped themselves "Christian," "Hindu," or "Muhammadan," but they do not obey God. That is the problem.

Visitor: Can you say in what way the Christians are disobedient?

Srila Prabhupada: Yes. The first point is that they violate the commandment "Thou shalt not kill" by maintaining slaughterhouses. Do you agree that this commandment is being violated?

Father Emmanuel: Personally, I agree.

Srila Prabhupada: Good. So if the Christians want to love God, they must stop killing animals.

Father Emmanuel: But isn't the most important point-

Srila Prabhupada: If you miss one point, there is a mistake in your calculation. Regardless of what you add or subtract after that, the mistake is already in the calculation, and everything that follows will also be faulty. We cannot simply accept that part of the scripture we like, and reject what we don't like, and still expect to get the result.

For example, a hen lays eggs with its back part and eats with its beak. A farmer may consider, "The front part of the hen is very expensive because I have to feed it. Better to cut it off." But if the head is missing there will be no eggs anymore, because the body is dead. Similarly, if we reject the difficult part of the scriptures and obey the part we like, such an interpretation will not help us. We have to accept all the injunctions of the scripture as they are given, not only those that suit us. If you do not follow the first order, "Thou shalt not kill," then where is the question of love of God?

Visitor: Christians take this commandment to be applicable to human beings, not to animals.

Srila Prabhupada: That would mean that Christ was not intelligent enough to use the right word: murder. There is killing, and there is murder. Murder refers to human beings. Do you think Jesus was not intelligent enough to use the right word -- murder -- instead of the word killing? Killing means any kind of killing, and especially animal killing. If Jesus had meant simply the killing of humans, he would have used the word murder.



Father Emmanuel: But in the Old Testament the commandment "Thou shalt not kill" does refer to murder. And when Jesus said, "Thou shalt not kill," he extended this commandment to mean that a human being should not only refrain from killing another human being, but should also treat him with love. He never spoke about man' s relationship with other living entities, but only about his relationship with other human beings. When he said, "Thou shalt not kill," he also meant in the mental and emotional sense -- that you should not insult anyone or hurt him, treat him badly, and so on.

Srila Prabhupada: We are not concerned with this or that testament but only with the words used in the commandments. If you want to interpret these words, that is something else. We understand the direct meaning. "Thou shalt not kill" means, "The Christians should not kill." You may put forth interpretations in order to continue the present way of action, but we understand very clearly that there is no need for interpretation. Interpretation is necessary if things are not clear. But here the meaning is clear. "Thou shalt not kill" is a clear instruction. Why should we interpret it?

Father Emmanuel: Isn' t the eating of plants also killing?

Srila Prabhupada: The Vaisnava philosophy teaches that we should not even kill plants unnecessarily. In the Bhagavad-gita (9.26) Krsna says:

patram puspam phalam toyam
yo me bhaktya prayacchati
tad aham bhakty-upahrtam
asnami prayatatmanah

"If someone offers Me with love and devotion a leaf, a flower, a fruit, or a little water, I will accept it." We offer Krsna only the kind of food He demands, and then we eat the remnants. If offering vegetarian food to Krsna were sinful, then it would be Krsna' s sin, not ours. But God is apapa-viddha -- sinful reactions are not applicable to Him. He is like the sun, which is so powerful that it can purify even urine -- something impossible for us to do. Krsna is also like a king, who may order a murderer to be hanged but who himself is beyond punishment because he is very powerful. Eating food first offered to the Lord is also something like a soldier' s killing during wartime. In a war, when the commander orders a man to attack, the obedient soldier who kills the enemy will get a medal. But if the same soldier kills someone on his own, he will be punished. Similarly, when we eat only prasada [the remnants of food offered to Krsna], we do not commit any sin. This is confirmed in the Bhagavad-gita (3.13):

yajna-sistasinah santo
mucyante sarva-kilbisaih
bhunjate te tv agham papa
ye pacanty atma-karanat



"The devotees of the Lord are released from all kinds of sins because they eat food that is first offered for sacrifice. Others, who prepare food for personal sense enjoyment, verily eat only sin."

Father Emmanuel: Krsna cannot give permission to eat animals?

Srila Prabhupada: Yes -- in the animal kingdom. But the civilized human being, the religious human being, is not meant to kill and eat animals. If you stop killing animals and chant the holy name Christ, everything will be perfect. I have not come to teach you, but only to request you to please chant the name of God. The Bible also demands this of you. So let's kindly cooperate and chant, and if you have a prejudice against chanting the name Krsna, then chant "Christos" or "Krsta" -- there is no difference. Sri Caitanya said: namnam akari bahudha nija-sarva-saktih. "God has millions and millions of names, and because there is no difference between God's name and Himself, each one of these names has the same potency as God." Therefore, even if you accept designations like

"Hindu," "Christian," or "Muhammadan," if you simply chant the name of God found in your own scriptures, you will attain the spiritual platform.

Human life is meant for self-realization -- to learn how to love God. That is the actual beauty of man. Whether you discharge this duty as a Hindu, a Christian, or a Muhammadan, it doesn't matter -- but discharge it!

Father Emmanuel: I agree.

Srila Prabhupada [pointing to a string of 108 meditation beads]: We always have these beads, just as you have your rosary. You are chanting, but why don't the other Christians also chant? Why should they miss this opportunity as human beings? Cats and dogs cannot chant, but we can,

because we have a human tongue. If we chant the holy names of God, we cannot lose anything; on the contrary, we gain greatly. My disciples practice chanting Hare Krsna constantly. They could also go to the cinema or do so many other things, but they have given everything up.

They eat neither fish nor meat nor eggs, they don't take intoxicants, they don't drink, they don't smoke, they don't partake in gambling, they don't speculate, and they don't maintain illicit sexual connections. But they do chant the holy name of God. If you would like to cooperate with us, then go to the churches and chant, "Christ," "Krsta," or "Krsna." What could be the objection?

Father Emmanuel: There is none. For my part, I would be glad to join you.

Srila Prabhupada: No, we are speaking with you as a representative of the Christian church. Instead of keeping the churches closed, why not give them to us? We would chant the holy name of God there twenty-four hours a day. In many places we have bought churches that were practically closed because no one was going there. In London I saw hundreds of churches that were closed or used for mundane purposes. We bought one such church in Los Angeles. It was sold because no one came there, but if you visit this same church today, you will see thousands



of people. Any intelligent person can understand what God is in five minutes; it doesn't require five hours.

Father Emmanuel: I understand.

Srila Prabhupada: But the people do not. Their disease is that they don't want to understand.

Visitor: I think understanding God is not a question of intelligence, but a question of humility.

Srila Prabhupada: Humility means intelligence. The humble and meek own the kingdom of God. This is stated in the Bible, is it not? But the philosophy of the rascals is that everyone is God, and today this idea has become popular. Therefore no one is humble and meek. If everyone thinks that he is God, why should he be humble and meek? Therefore I teach my disciples

how to become humble and meek. They always offer their respectful obeisances in the temple and to the spiritual master, and in this way they make advancement. The qualities of humbleness and meekness lead very quickly to spiritual realization. In the Vedic scriptures it is said, "To those who have firm faith in God and the spiritual master, who is His representative, the meaning of the Vedic scriptures is revealed."

Father Emmanuel: But shouldn't this humility be offered to everyone else, also?

Srila Prabhupada: Yes, but there are two kinds of respect: special and ordinary. Sri Krsna Caitanya taught that we shouldn't expect honor for ourselves, but should always respect everyone else, even if he is disrespectful to us. But special respect should be given to God and His pure devotee.

Father Emmanuel: Yes, I agree.

Srila Prabhupada: I think the Christian priests should cooperate with the Krsna consciousness movement. They should chant the name Christ or Christos and should stop condoning the slaughter of animals. This program follows the teachings of the Bible; it is not my philosophy. Please act accordingly and you will see how the world situation will change.

Father Emmanuel: I thank you very much.

Srila Prabhupada: Hare Krsna..



Twenty-Six Questions Commonly Asked of Devotees

1. Why do you shave your head?

It's our trademark. It identifies us as vaisnavas (devotees of Lord Krishna). Just as doctors or policemen have their uniforms so that they can be identified, this is the dress of a devotee of Krishna so that people can easily identify us and ask questions about spiritual life. Shaving the head is not absolutely necessary for spiritual advancement but it helps one to become free from vanity and false pride. It is a sign of renunciation and it is very clean.

2. Why don't women shave their head?

Men and women are different in many ways and how they practice spiritual life differs. It is traditional for men to shave their heads, but not for women to do so. Not all men shave their heads either; some do and some don't.

3. What is that mark on your forehead?

These marks, called "tilaka", indicate that we are Krishna devotees. They mark the body as a temple. Within the body reside the soul and God. One should learn to see like that. Instead of making so many material designations based upon our bodily differences, we should see each other as brothers - spiritually. People are suffering due to a lack of such spiritual vision. The goal of our movement is to teach people how to see each other as spirit souls, servants of God.

4. Why does your movement consider women less intelligent?

We don't say women are less intelligent. That women and men are different does not mean one is automatically superior to other. In fact, Krishna consciousness is the real women's liberation, because we are all equally marvelous from the spiritual point of view.

5. What do you do for fun?

Our whole life is recreation. Our business is chanting, dancing and feasting. Who else is chanting and dancing at 4:30 in the morning?

All activities in relation to the Lord are a cause of spiritual happiness. It is much more satisfying than material fun. In material happiness the realization or attainment is always less than the expectation. In spiritual happiness, the realization is far greater than the expectation. Because we are experiencing a pleasure much higher than material happiness, we can easily give it up. It's a higher taste.

6. Sex is a wonderful and natural part of life. Why do you deny yourselves that pleasure?

What is natural? Our real nature is not the urges of the body, it is the soul's relationship with God. Besides, everybody knows that sex is not satisfying. A wonderful pleasure is one who which is always increasing, spiritual pleasure is the truly wonderful pleasure. Sex has its place in marriage but its importance is greatly overrated in our society.



7. What do you believe?

Krishna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead and we are His eternal servants. Our real place is not here in this material world, but in the spiritual world with Krishna. We are here because we have the foolish desire to enjoy things in separation from God, rather than in our proper relationship with Him.

Krishna consciousness is not a matter of belief. It can be tested and experienced. Therefore it is a science.

8. Do you believe in Jesus Christ?

Not only we believe in him, we follow him, which is the important thing. Jesus Christ is a pure devotee of God, sent by the Lord to deliver us from material existence. Because he is giving us the way to reach God, he is as good as God, but he is not God.

9. What' s wrong with eating meat? Christ ate meat.

Firstly, it' s not certain that Christ ate meat. The Bible has been translated and, in many places, may have been changed. Besides, what' s important is what' s right, and from any conceivable perspective meat-eating is wrong. It' s cruel, it' s bad for your body, it' s economically disastrous. Why do it?

10. Why do you worship idols?

We worship Krishna, Who is God. The Deities of the Lord are His authorized forms, which help us focus our minds on Him, so that we can see and serve Him; this is His causeless mercy upon us. An idol is a concocted form to represent one' s own idea. If you follow sports, or read "People" magazine, you are the one who' s worshipping idols, not us.

11. Aren' t you limiting God by saying that He has a form?

No. You are limiting God by saying that He doesn' t have a form. He has an unlimited spiritual form. From His form the whole creation, spiritual and material, is coming. He has an impersonal aspect and a personal aspect. God' s original supreme form is that of Sri Krishna.

12. Wouldn' t your preaching be more effective if you dressed like Westerners?

Sometimes it is and sometimes it isn' t. In certain situations preaching is better if we wear robes. However, when people are too materially attached to appreciate the dress of a clergyman, then we wear ordinary Western dress.

13. Aren' t you running away from reality by being a Hare Krishna devotee?

Define reality. Is reality this temporary material residence or the eternal nature of the soul? We follow every scripture in affirming that reality is our eternal loving relationship with God. That is blissful of course. Aren' t you really objecting to the fact that we' ve chosen to be happy rather than miserable? If you are saying that happiness is illusion and misery is reality, that' s a definition of reality which we see no reason to share.



14. How can you criticize modern science and technology and at the same time use modern conveyances and machinery?

We don't condemn science and technology. We condemn the worship of them, the attitude that science and technology are the only important things in the world. They are means to an end, tools which can be helpful if properly used. We think people will be happier if life were materially simpler, if they had fewer distractions from concentrating on their relationship with God, but we take the world as we find it. Utility is the principle.

15. Haven't you lost your individuality by becoming a devotee, since you all dress and look the same?

Clothes are unimportant. At most, they are an indication of social position. These are the clothes of a clergyman; they are easy to maintain, inexpensive and comfortable. Of course, as devotees we agree on our philosophy, but we use our individual talents in individual ways in Krishna's service. By being Krishna's servants, we are more truly individuals than are people who mindlessly follow a fashion and pursue socially imposed goals of maximizing sense gratification.

16. Isn't this constant chanting a form of hypnosis?

No. Hypnosis is a form of sleep, but chanting the name of God gives one heightened realization and great clarity of intelligence. Don't believe me, try it for yourself. It works.

17. Why do you worship an ordinary man (the guru)?

The bonafide guru is not an ordinary man. He is not worshiped as God, but as the representative of God. Because he gives us Krishna, we offer him all respects. That's simple gratitude, if nothing else.

18. You are not getting any wages, how do you know you are not being exploited?

Our movement is very widespread and every temple is managerially independent, so it is up to every person's responsibility to know that their line of authority is also working without material personal motivations.

19. How can one tell a bonafide guru from a fake one?

The guru's qualification is that he delivers the message of God as set down in the scriptures and the tradition, without alteration or adulteration. He has to be saintly in character, and coming from a succession of spiritual masters. Perhaps most important of all, is that he must be actively engaged in the mission of his spiritual master. By following his instructions, does one develop love of God? Does one feel himself becoming detached from the material concept of life?

20. If men and women are spiritually equal, then why aren't there any women gurus or leaders in your movement?



The qualification for being a guru is not that one is a man or a woman, but how much one is surrendered to God. There are many examples of women gurus and spiritual leaders in our tradition. (Show them a copy of Teachings of Queen Kunti)

21. If your religion is so wonderful, why are there so many problems in India where it came from?

It doesn't come from India, it comes from God. At one time India was very religious, the people followed the scriptures very closely, and India was the most prosperous country in the world. Now, they are not following the scriptures, they are trying to imitate the materialism of the West. So they are suffering. If one neglects the laws of God, then one suffers.

22. All religions say that they have the answer. So how is your religion any different?

We don't say that we are the best. We say that the process that helps you develop love of God is the best. You have to judge by the result. Who is actually developing love of God?

23. Where do you get the money to support your movement?

The Lord maintains all living entities throughout the universe, so surely He will maintain His devotees. We raise money by selling books, running restaurants, and from donations from our working householder members, congregation and life members, and from the general public.

24. Why do you harass people by begging for money?

Begging implies that one is too lazy to work for what one needs, so we don't beg. We solicit gifts not for ourselves, but for helping suffering humanity. Most people don't feel harassed, and many people appreciate our literature. If those few who get disturbed would take the time to understand how we use the funds, they would not object.

25. Couldn't you do something more useful for society than chanting all day?

We don't just chant all day. Devotees are engaged in many activities, publishing books, building farms and schools, making films, and distributing food and literature to thousands. Besides, chanting is a process for reviving our natural God consciousness. This is actually the most important activity in human society. If more people took the time to understand the basic principles of God consciousness, the problems of human society would be solved.

26. One cannot see the soul or God, so why believe in something we can't see?

Why believe in atoms, viruses, or the back side of the moon? You can't see them. There are many things whose existence we accept without being able to perceive them directly. One can accept the existence of the soul and of God by their symptoms. Life or consciousness within the body, and the perfect symmetry and detail of the universe are symptoms which indicate the



existence of the soul and of a Supreme Being. We can accept on faith that there are spiritually realized persons who can actually see and know God. And as one becomes more and more purified by following a bonafide process of self-realization, one will also be able to see the soul and God.

Parents and Family

Human life is different from animal life in that human beings can inquire into the nature of the Absolute, and are able to choose to abide by the laws of God. Human parenthood, likewise, is not simply for the purpose of reproducing the species, but rather to enable one to become free of incarceration in this material body.

People today generally have children as an undesired product of sex life, and even if the child is "wanted" from conception, the parents seldom have any knowledge of the real needs of the child. Thus children tend to distrust and disrespect their parents and other authorities, in the belief that these people are not qualified to properly exercise their responsibilities. In Krishna consciousness, children can respect parents and other authorities very much due to their spotless characters.

Having clearly understood these points, a devotee is not a fanatic who rejects his parents as "maya". Instead, he is gentle and compassionate, knowing how and when to preach so as to elevate everyone, including his parents. After millions of births, in the material world we have finally had an opportunity to know Krishna and engage in devotional service. Clearly, our parents had something to do with the blessed occurrence, and thus they are to be respected very much. They may be attached to their bodies, but if we use our bodies in the service of the Lord and thus become spiritualized, then they also derived benefit.

Having come to Krishna consciousness, we realize that we didn't love anyone before, but now, as we awaken our real love for Krishna, we naturally love all His parts and parcels, including our parents. Instead of loving our parents less now, we love them more, because we care for the real person, the soul, and also we have more love to give.

There is a natural bond of affection between the parent and child. So devotees should keep in touch with parents regularly by letter, telephone and visits, and remember them on birthdays, anniversaries, Christmas, etc. We shouldn't be afraid to chat a bit with them about their mundane affairs. At least in the beginning, it's quite enough preaching for them to accept the fact that now we are getting up early to pray, we've shaved our heads and become vegetarians, and so forth. Our presence reminds them of Krishna and they may feel embarrassed about smoking, eating meat, or the like in front of us. We can be patient about actually preaching to them; they are stuck with us, and we with them, for a long time to come.

Sometimes parents are unreasonably inimical; this makes for difficulties. A devotee should be tolerant and not take illogical criticism too seriously, any more than one would take too seriously the comments of an intoxicated person or a small child. Such parents generally calm down and start to like Krishna consciousness after a year or so. In the beginning we have to avoid situations that will cause them to blaspheme and don't provoke them by committing the



ninth offense against the holy name (preaching to the unreceptive).

In the beginning, the most important thing is to become fixed up and strong in spiritual life without distractions. It' s recommended that for the first three months one should stay in the temple and follow the Bhakta (or Bhaktin) program. Rather than visiting relatives this time it' s best to keep in touch with letters or by telephone. They are of course most welcome to visit you at the temple. But if after a couple of weeks you show up on the doorstep with a shaved head, robes, and a bead bag, that' s obviously quite a shock and not easy for them to adjust to. The more gradual approach is better. Let them know that you are trying this out for a while to see if you like before making any final decisions or commitments. That will prevent much unnecessary worry and grief.

Mayavada Philosophy

Mayavada Philosophy was inaugurated by Sripad Sankaracharya in order to defeat Buddhism. The Mayavadis believe that the highest truth is Brahman or spirit, which is unlimited and without form and activity. They contend that all living entities are one with Brahman, but are presently covered by illusion and thus separated from Brahman. When the illusion is dispelled, the living entities once again become one with Brahman and lose their individuality. From this perspective, the Mayavadis do not accept the form and personality of Krishna as supreme, regarding them instead as products of maya. Because they hold this view, the Mayavadis were described by Lord Caitanya as the greatest offenders against Krishna. Mayavadi philosophy is the form of religious thought most widely known in the West, generally under the erroneous general name of "Vedanta". The impersonalist essence of Mayavada thought, moreover, is central to the "philosophies" of most westerners who are not dogmatic followers of the Bible.

Most people don' t have sufficient information about the transcendental form of God, so they're very much influenced by impersonalism. When talking with those who accept Vedic authority, we can easily establish the vaisnava position by citing scripture. However, since the majority of people we meet have little or no faith in scripture, we must advocate our philosophy on the basis of logic and argument. There are several blatant defects in the Mayavada philosophy which are worth remembering for discussing these matters.

Since we have personality, how is it that our ultimate source is devoid of personality? If having personality is a good thing, which seems to be the case, then we would appear to be superior to our impersonal source. The Vedanta-sutra says that the Absolute Truth is the source of everything. So, personality must be there in the Absolute Truth.

They say that the impersonal Brahman manifests in the material world in a personal form. How has personality come from impersonality? Where do we have any experience of such a phenomenon? In the Bhagavad-gita (7.24), Krishna declares that those who think that His personality has come from something impersonal are devoid of intelligence.

Brahman is unchangeable. How could it fragment itself temporarily as the individual souls of



the material world? And why would it choose to do so? Bhagavad gita (15.7) explains that the souls are eternally part and parcel of the Supreme Lord, and defines individuality as an eternal principle (2.12).

If we are all God, how is it that we are currently suffering in ignorance in this material world? What kind of God are we exactly? Doesn't this mean that ignorance or illusion is more powerful than God? How can that be?

Their contention that Krishna's form is material betrays a misunderstanding of His transcendental appearance and nature. Krishna's form is not constituted of matter and He is possessed of unlimited multifarious potencies. If Krishna is a mundane personality, why are self realized souls attracted to hearing his pastimes (Bhag. 1.7.10)?

Reality is, as the Mayavadis contend, beyond all material form and duality. But they are wrong in denying that there is a spiritual form and variety. The negation of variety is itself a material concept, which gives us no positive information about the spiritual reality.

Their desire to be one with God is rightly called the ultimate snare of maya. Frustrated in their attempts to be the supreme enjoyer of the material world, they desire to merge with the supreme. This desire is illusion because the soul hasn't realized his constitutional position as Krishna's servant. Srimad Bhagavatam (10.2.32) points out that the misconception of the impersonalists is due to unclear intelligence and even if they attain some level of impersonal realization they ultimately fall back to the material platform because of not taking shelter of Krishna's lotus feet.

The material world is not false. Because it comes from Truth is real, but the manifestations of this world are temporary. It is the belief that the material universe is permanent that is false.